

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4835

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE GUATEMALA 5955

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GT

SUBJECT: MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

SUMMARY: CANDIDATES RUNNING ON GOVERNMENT COALITION SLATES (MLN-PID) WON IN AT LEAST THIRTEEN OF SIXTEEN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. THREE MUNICIPALITIES WON BY THE DCG INCLUDED TWO DEPARTMENTAL CAPITALS, ALTHOUGH IN ONE OF THEM THE PRESENT MAYOR HAS REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE RESULTS. THE PR WON NOTHING. VOTING IN THE ELCTIONS WAS LIGHT. END SUMMARY.

1. GUATEMALANS WENT TO THE POLLS IN 16 MUNICIPALITIES ON OCTOBER 27. THESE ELECTIONS WERE SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN HELD ON MARCH 3, AT THE TIME THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS WERE ELECTED, BUT IN THESE TOWNS NO VOTING FOR MUNICIPAL CANDIATES WAS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OFFICIAL BALLOTS FAILED TO ARRIVE.

2. VOTING WAS GENERALLY LIGHT, AND ONLY ABOUT A THIRD OF THE ELIGIBLE VOTERS (TOTAL OF ABOUT 90,000 IN THE 16 TOWNS) TURNED OUT.

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3. THE MLN-PID COALITION CANDIDATES WON

IN THIRTEEN OF THE 16 MUNICIPIOS ACCORDING TO GUATEMALA PRESS OCTOBER 29, BUT THE RESULTS HAVE NOT BEEN MADE OFFICIAL. BASED ON UNOFFICIAL VOTE COUNTS, HOWEVER, THE MLN-PID CANDIDATES WON MORE THAN HALF OF THE VOTES CAST (11,000 OUT OF 22,000 VOTES). THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT TOWN WON BY COALITION CANDIDATES WERE MALACATAN (SAN MARCOS), AND EL PALMAR (QUEZALTENANGO). BOTH OF THESE TOWNS HAD FORMALLY BEEN PR STRONGHOLDS. ALL THE OTHER TOWNS WON BY COALITION CANDIDATES REPORTEDLY HAD LESS THAN TWO THOUSAND ELIGIBLE VOTERS EACH, AND THE UNOFFICIAL VOTE COUNT WAS UNDER 1,300 TOTAL IN EACH OF THEM.

4. THE DCG REPORTEDLY WON IN 3 OF THE 16 MUNICIPIOS. THE DCG CANDIDATES WON LESS THAN A THIRD OF THE TOTAL VOTES (6,000 OUT OF 22,000), BUT WERE VICTORIOUS IN TWO DEPARTMENTAL CAPITALS, SANTA CRUZ DEL QUICHE AND TOTONICAPAN. THE DCG VICTORY IN TOTONICAPAN NOW APPEARS THREATENED BY REFUSAL OF INCUMBENT MAYOR (MLN) TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE RESULTS. A DEMONSTRATION BY PERSONS PROTESTING HIS REFUSAL WAS BROKEN UP ABOUT MIDNIGHT SUNDAY BY POLICE USING TEARGAS, AND MONDAY THE CITY HALL WAS CLOSED. DCG SECRETARY-GENERAL VINICIO CEREZO HAS PROTESTED THE LOCAL MAYOR'S REFUSAL TO CERTIFY THE RESULTS. AS YET THERE HAS BEEN NO WORK FROM THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY WITH REGARD TO THE DISPUTED RETURNS.

5. FOR THE PR, MARCH'S DISASTROUS SHOWING HAS BEEN FOLLOWED BY OCTOBER'S DEBACLE. PR CANDIDATES DID NOT WIN IN A SINGLE MUNICIPALITY, AND UNOFFICIAL RESULTS SHOWED THAT PR CANDIDATES RECEIVED ONLY 15 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE (3,000 OUT OF 22,000). FORMER PR STRONGHOLDS IN SAN MARCOS AND QUEZALTENANGO FELL TO COALITION CANDIDATES. IN ONE MUNICIPIO THE PR CANDIDATE RECEIVED ONLY 15 VOTES. PR SECRETARY GENERAL CARLOS SAGASTUME UNDERSTATED THE MATTER WHEN HE DECLARED THAT "THESE ELECTIONS WERE WORSE THAN THOSE OF MARCH 3."

6. COMMENT: BY-ELECTIONS IN GUATEMALA TRADITIONALLY HAVE BEEN WON BY THE PARTY IN POWER AND HAVE PROVEN TO BE POOR BELLWEATHERS OF THE OUTCOME IN FUTURE PRESIDENTIAL CONTESTS. BY-ELECTION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VOTERS ARE BELIEVED TO HOPE THAT MAYORS WILL BE MOST SUCCESSFUL IN HELPING THEIR TOWNS IF ELECTED WITH SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S PARTY. IN VIEW OF THIS HISTORY, THE DCG'S PERFORMANCE ON SUNDAY WAS RELATIVELY GOOD. THE PR'S DEBACLE SEEMS LIKELY TO STIMULATE RENEWED DEMANDS FOR LEADERSHIP CHANGES WITHIN THAT PARTY. THE OUTCOME OF THE TOTONICAPAN DISPUTE PROBABLY WILL BE VIEWED BY THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AS A SIGNIFICANT INDICATOR OF THE LAUGERUD GOVERNMENT'S SERIOUSNESS ABOUT ITS

TENTATIVE EFFORTS TOWARD PEACFUL COEXISTENCE WITH ITS OPPOSITION.
END COMMENT.

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ANDREWS

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